

FOOTBALL NOTES AND NEWS.

By "Grasshopper."

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON v. CRYSTAL PALACE.

THE BLUES JUST "GET HOME."

From past experience Luton know what a hard nut the Palace are to crack—up to Saturday, out of a succession of matches they had only been able to defeat the Londoners once. We also know what great things they have been doing this season—their rout of Newcastle United in the English Cup made them the idols of the South—while they are still in the competition, and it is not such long odds on Everton knocking them out either. There is one thing about the Palace—they are never done, and though for the sake of argument we will admit that that Tyne job was a bit of a fluke, there is no team they are more "at home" to than Luton.

The Palace are by no means in their right position. According to their strength and combination—indeed according to their display all through they should not be almost at the bottom of the Southern League. The explanation, however, is a simple one—we have had to put up with it ourselves—hard luck. They have lost exactly twice as many matches as they have won; but we can call to mind several occasions this season when the Palace have met with serious misfortune. This week the Glaziers stand next to the bottom, and though they have a couple of matches in hand, they will have plenty to do if they want to creep up. Unlike the First Division of the League, however, it is not a question of having to step down should they be left amongst the bottom two clubs at the end of the season; because in this case it is a question of getting into the Southern League by vote—just the same as Luton got in two seasons ago—and without doubt the Palace will get the necessary support.

Having done so well—and we may also say, having been so fortunate in the Cup competition—the Palace are not likely to trouble much, at least for the present, about the Southern League. So on Saturday it was felt that Luton would "get home," so to speak. Certainly the Palace would not run any hazards at getting any of their men hurt, while a couple of their best players were on the injured list. However, that point should not be seriously taken into consideration, because the one or two "reserves" they put in the field were of such calibre as to come up to first-team men.

Seeing that the visitors had done so well in the Cup, one would have expected to have seen a bigger crowd than 5,000. The display was certainly a good one. Luton succeeded in obtaining the lead, and just managed to win, but all things considered, surely one would not have been dissatisfied with a draw. Perhaps, after all that would have been a fair result—not that Luton did not deserve their victory.

The teams were:—

Luton: Platt; Hogg and McCurdy; F. Hawkes, White, and R. Hawkes; Latheron, Gittins, Brown, Fitzpatrick and Barnes.

Crystal Palace: Hewitson; Wills and Needham; Innerd, Ledger, and Forster; Weston, Hodgkinson, Astley, Woodger and Roberts.

The visitors won the toss, and at once attacked. They almost scored in the first minute, a good shot by Ledger missing by inches. Good combination by the home forwards changed the scene of operations, and Barnes had an opening from a well-judged pass by Gittins. He had ample time to steady himself, but failed to do so, and sent the ball yards wide of the post.

At the other end Platt just succeeded in saving from Weston. The game was fairly fast, with Luton slightly on top. Barnes narrowly missed opening the score, a good shot from his foot hitting the post when Hewitson was quite beaten. The Palace improved considerably as half-time drew near, and the game became faster. Both goals were threatened, but the interval arrived with nothing scored.

Resuming, Luton at once rushed towards Hewitson, and Barnes sent the ball right across the goal-mouth. Latheron forced a corner after this, and from the ensuing exchanges Brown headed into the net. This score enlivened play considerably, and the exchanges became extremely fast. A splendid run and centre by Barnes was turned to account by Fitzpatrick, who scored the second goal with a grand shot.

The Palace then attacked, and Platt was called on to save from Woodger at close quarters. At the other end Wills pulled up Weston when the latter was well away, but Weston came again and forced a corner. This was well placed, and Astley seized an opening and scored. Luton spoilt several likely chances by getting offside, and the free kicks gave the Palace a good opportunity to equalise. Platt saved two good shots from Astley and Innerd, and a grand attempt by Roberts grazed the wrong side of the bar. The Palace made great efforts to draw level, but failed.

Result: Luton, 2 goals; Crystal Palace, 1.

There was one characteristic of Luton's play, their absolute neglect to take advantage of opportunities. One cannot really help wondering what would have been the result if the Palace had had so many openings as the homesters had. The Glaziers, of course, have an admirable set of forwards, Roberts, the left wing man, and Astley, the centre, being always dangerous. What would Luton have done on Saturday without their halves? That is saying, What would Luton have done with the Palace forwards. Hewitson, too, is a tower of strength to his side, and both goals that were registered against him, especially Fitzpatrick's, were well obtained. Once more, so far as the halves are concerned, Fred Hawkes was far and away the finest player on the field. Latheron is but a weak substitute

on the wing, and the crowd puzzled their brains in trying to discover the "splendid points" which a newspaper critic declares Gittins possesses.